U.S. Army (Moore)

The chiefs at Normandy, 1944: Arnold, King, and Marshall with Eisenhower.

Senator Nunn and colleagues.

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Future Trends in Defense Organization

By SAM NUNN

The Pentagon's ability to prepare for and conduct joint operations has improved more in ten years—since passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act—than in the entire period since the need for jointness was recognized by the creation of the Joint Army-Navy Board in 1903. Over the same decade the Armed Forces moved to a point where the Chairman could maintain in the Autumn-Winter 1994–95 issue of *JFQ* that: "No other nation can match our ability to combine forces on the battlefield and fight jointly."

By effectively implementing Goldwater-Nichols, DOD has enormously improved both the conduct of military operations and the management of defense resources. Today's continuing search for organizational improvements in no way detracts from the superb performance of the last decade. In fact, the 1986 legislation and recent successes combine to create opportunities for further enhancements.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act rightly focused on joint military structures—the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Staff, and unified commands—where significant organizational deficiencies had existed for more than four decades. Some assessments reveal weaknesses on the administrative side of DOD which have been magnified by post-Cold War security challenges. Excessive bureaucracy, slow response to new missions, ambiguous responsibilities among major defense components, and management by policymakers need to be examined. One of these, excessive bureaucracy, also plagues the unified command structure. Externally, organizational shortcomings in the interagency system undermine DOD in carrying out its missions.

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Excessive Bureaucracy

The defense bureaucracy is too large. The Pentagon has reduced force levels by approximately 25 percent and defense manpower by 31 percent since the end of the Cold War. The bureaucracy, which was excessive during the Cold War, has not been cut proportionately. The corporate DOD headquarters still employs 30,000, and staffs within 25 miles of the Pentagon total 150,000. The bureaucracy in the Washington metropolitan area has shrunk since 1987, but only by 15 percent.

Excessive bureaucracy is not confined to the Pentagon. A study by the Chairman's office, *The History of the Unified Command Plan, 1946–93*, admits "The end of the Cold War triggered dramatic changes in the U.S. military establishment but not in the UCP. . . ." In the early 1990s, the Joint Staff under General Colin Powell considered boldly streamlining the command structure. Resistance to innovative proposals preserved much of what existed. Two changes—creating the U.S. Strategic Command and refocusing and redesignating the U.S. Atlantic Command—were long overdue. The latter's role as joint force integrator, trainer, and provider was just an improved version of Strike Command (1962–71) and Readiness Command (1972–87). Seven years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, DOD remains burdened by a Cold War UCP.

DOD must reduce the overhead in both its administrative and operational chains of command

The service component commands of unified commands also need to be reviewed. Several serve as components of more than one unified command, which reduces the problem of excessive bureaucracy somewhat. Nevertheless, their continued existence needs to be reviewed to ascertain if there is not a better way to oversee logistics and other support for operational forces and to provide a service perspective to unified commanders.

DOD must reduce the overhead of numerous duplicative staffs in both its administrative and operational chains of command. Not only do these vast organizations consume talented personnel and scarce funds, they drain the system of energy. This bureaucracy is insufficiently responsive to meet security needs in a more turbulent era. A reduction in the number and size of these headquarters will also free up personnel for combatant forces and help remedy the present unbalanced tooth-to-tail ratio.

Response to New Missions

DOD's reaction to new missions is too slow. This lack of adaptability is rooted in its organizational structure. Each headquarters staff in the Pentagon—the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Joint Staff, service secretariats, and military staffs—is organized along traditional lines with manpower, intelligence, logistics, and other functional activities. The input nature of defense budget categories reinforces this functional orientation. Although this structure provided needed stability during the Cold War, it does not adjust well to new missions. Peter Drucker's assessment is highly relevant to the Pentagon.

The functional principle . . . has high stability but little adaptability. It perpetuates and develops technical and functional skills, that is, middle managers, but it resists new ideas and inhibits top-management development and vision.[1]

A dynamic world requires a defense organization that can prepare quickly for a wide range of challenges. *Joint Vision 2010* makes the point that "We will need organizations and processes that are agile enough to exploit emerging technologies and respond to diverse threats and enemy capabilities." But current DOD organizations do not exhibit this characteristic.

The Pentagon's delayed, fractured reaction to counterproliferation reveals this inadequacy. While the President and Secretary repeatedly cited proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as the most serious national security concern, the operational and administrative sides of DOD took several years to formulate an organizational response to this priority mission.

The Pentagon's and the intelligence community's response to the terrorist threat, as evidenced by the two recent terrorist bombings in Saudi Arabia, were also inadequate.

Ambiguous Responsibilities

The assignment of administrative responsibilities among OSD, the Joint Staff, and military department staffs is too ambiguous. Too many organizations duplicate the work of others. This major problem has a long history.

Between creating the position of Secretary of Defense under the National Security Act of 1947 and full empowerment of that office by Goldwater-Nichols in 1986, Secretaries were not able to get quality advice and assistance from the JCS system nor to tame the parochial tendencies of the military departments. They thus increasingly assigned tasks to a more responsive OSD. In 1983, Secretary James Schlesinger explained the result in this way: "The growth of [OSD] is a reflection of the weaknesses of the military command system. The Office of the Secretary has provided the analyses cutting across service lines, which the Joint Chiefs cannot now provide."[2]

Since Goldwater-Nichols has corrected many traditional deficiencies—especially the lack of sound military advice—rationalizing responsibilities among OSD, the Joint Staff, and military departments is both possible and desirable. Deciding how to divide the work will be complicated by the need to consider the roles of defense agencies and functional unified commands which will compete for responsibilities within the Pentagon as well as with each other.

Management by Policymakers

The involvement of defense policymaking staffs in management activities is too extensive. Traditionally, OSD and the Joint Staff focused on policy-level activities. Defense economics and the nature of warfare have led to the creation of numerous defense-wide or joint activities, such as defense agencies, DOD field activities, functional

Joining Southern Watch, September 1996.

U.S. Navy

U.S. Air Force (Steve Thurow)

F–16 taking off from Williamstown, Australia, during Iron Fist '95.

unified commands, and joint boards and centers. These require management oversight by an organization with defense-wide responsibilities. This has meant that OSD and the Joint Staff have had to pick up these management duties.

The emergence of nontraditional missions has also added to OSD management burdens. The administrative work of new, nontraditional missions (such as counterterrorism, counterdrug, and counterproliferation) does not fit into a single military department. As a result, Secretaries have assigned responsibility to OSD offices for direct management of these activities.

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Diverting policymaking organizations to management duties creates a twofold problem. First, management tasks—which tend to be more visible and urgent—come to dominate organizational activity and the more cerebral policymaking receives less attention. Second, direct involvement in managing or overseeing an activity makes it difficult for policymakers to maintain their objectivity in recommending policies to govern that activity. They can become special pleaders for activities which they manage. What the Secretary needs is objective advice from his immediate civilian and military staffs, not another assortment of parochial arguments.

Narrow Security Organization

Our organizational concept for national security is too narrow. Today's security challenges require integrating the activities of many departments and agencies, some not traditionally viewed as contributors to national security. But we still retain the formal structure of the National Security Council (NSC) designed for the immediate post-World War II period with its focus on diplomatic, military, and intelligence functions.

A second dimension of our interagency woes is that DOD, especially the Joint Staff, has long held other agencies at arms' length. This tradition had many causes, including concerns over security leaks, uninformed interference, and raids on defense resources. Such bureaucratic thinking can no longer be afforded. Even a major regional conflict such as Desert Storm required an extensive interagency effort. Lesser operations, where nonmilitary instruments play even larger roles, will rely on effective contributions by civilian departments and agencies. The old days of the Pentagon doing the entire mission are gone for good.

Some elements of DOD recognize this situation. In crises they have cooperated more with their interagency partners. Restore Democracy in Haiti represented the most forward leaning effort to date. As one study observed, "Interagency political-military planning occurred at a higher and more integrated level than in any earlier, similar operation."[3] Despite these improvements, Restore Democracy illustrated that interagency coordination in general is rudimentary compared to the need. Moreover, Pentagon efforts have not been institutionalized and are heavily dependent on personalities.

Working backwards through these problems, the first requirement is for the Government to adapt its organization to current national security realities. New members, especially the Attorney General and the Secretaries of the Treasury and Commerce, may need to be formally added to the National Security Council. Designating these Cabinet officers as members may serve to catalyze necessary improvements in their departments' national security capabilities and work practices.

Now It's Time for Goldwater-Nichols II

Ten years ago, Congress mandated a giant change in the defense establishment by passing the Goldwater-Nichols Act. In the ensuing years, significant progress has been made in defense organization. The roles of the Chairman, service chiefs, Joint Staff, and CINCs have evolved into a much more decentralized organization. Greater authority and responsibility have been placed in the hands of the operational commanders. Jointness is now ingrained and not just lip service.

Despite the changes in the defense arena, little change has occurred in the national security medium. The current system is still very centralized and run from Washington. One could argue for a centralized system while we still confronted the Soviet Union. Today, the world's challenges have become more regionalized. The U.S. officials who best understand regional challenges live and work in geographical areas as representatives of their departments and agencies.

It's now time for Goldwater-Nichols II. Such a law would address the decentralization of national security apparatus, placing more responsibility in the hands of "commanders" in the field such as ambassadors and department representatives. This would improve coordination across all segments of government in a given region because the people who best understand local problems could work together in proposing solutions.

Goldwater-Nichols contributed materially to our success in Desert Storm. Further reform has the potential of contributing to regional challenges today and those we will face tomorrow.

—General Edward C. Meyer, USA (Ret.)

Many approaches taken for granted by DOD—such as contingency planning, peacetime exercises, and overseas crisis augmentation teams—are alien to some departments and agencies. The interagency process will continue to experience shortcomings until all contributors to national security are prepared to play their roles.

Turning to internal DOD reorganization, the Secretary should consider assigning elsewhere those direct management tasks currently performed by OSD and the Joint Staff. Defense-wide

the Secretary may need to create a new entity to assume OSD management tasks

and joint activities will continue to grow in size and importance. The Pentagon should act accordingly now and create sound management approaches that can be sustained. In the case of the Joint Staff, ACOM might assume some of its management duties, including most tasks now performed by the Director for Operational Plans and Interoperability (J-7). The Secretary may need to create a new entity to assume OSD management tasks. A more rational approach of managing defense-wide activities combined with refocusing OSD on policymaking would strengthen Pentagon performance in the long run.

DOD needs to put a priority on developing a new concept for dividing work among OSD, defense agencies, the Joint Staff, military departments, and unified commands. Since its various components have operated ambiguously for decades absent such a concept, the task of formulating an overarching plan will be challenging.

The Secretary of Defense should consider two ways of responding to new missions. First, he could establish a disinterested staff to scan the horizon for the emergence of new missions and to prepare an organizational approach to handle them. Second, when a new mission does not fall under a pre-existing organization, he could ensure that entities which manage defense-wide activities are capable of rapidly assuming administrative management of it.

Although counterintuitive, DOD can manage better with fewer people. Rationalizing responsibilities among the three major components will aid the search for headquarters staff reductions. The time has also come to merge civilian and military staffs in the military department headquarters. The advantages would outweigh the disadvantages. The unified command plan also needs review.

The United States struggled for forty-five years to create a defense establishment that could effectively and efficiently prepare for and wage a conflict such as World War II or a possible global clash with the Soviets. Hopefully the Pentagon will not take as long to reorganize for the security challenges of the post-Cold War era, in which organizational adaptability and quickness are major assets. The record of the last decade suggests that DOD will find and implement effective solutions to these problems. JFQ

NOTES

[1] Peter F. Drucker, "New Templates for Today's Organizations," in *Harvard Business Review on Management* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 631.

[2] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Organization, Structure and Decisionmaking Procedures of the Department of Defense*, hearings before the Committee on Armed Services, 98th Cong., 1st sess., 1983–1984, part 5, p. 188.

[3] Margaret Daly Hayes and Gary F. Wheatley, *Interagency and Political-Military Dimensions of Peace Operations: Haiti—A Case Study* (Washington: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 1996), p. 49.